

ABSTRACT

THESIS: The Impact of Participation in Wellness University Adult Fitness Classes
on Health Outcomes and Behaviors

STUDENT: Amy J. Perkins

DEGREE: Master of Science in Dietetics

COLLEGE: Applied Sciences and Technology

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The purpose of this study was to assess the change in anthropometric measures, physical activity levels, food choices, and stage of change for seven health behaviors in adults who participated in fitness classes sponsored by *Operation Wellness*, a Robert Wood Johnson Local Initiatives Funding Partner grant, in Wells County, IN. Over the grant's four years, 961 individuals 19 years of age and older enrolled in at least one semester-long *Wellness University* fitness class and completed both a pre-assessment and at least one post-assessment between the fall of 2003 and the summer of 2007. At baseline, 40.9 percent (n=286) of respondents reported engaging in either no exercise (n=35; 12.2%) or exercised only one to two days per week (n=82; 28.7%). After one semester, 81.4 percent met the goal of exercising aerobically for 30 minutes or more at least three times per week. Paired analysis indicated participants lost an average of three pounds (173.2±47.1 lbs. vs. 170.7±45.5 lbs.; t=2.02; p=0.045), lowered their systolic (125.9±15.9 mmHg vs. 121.5±16.6 mmHg (t=2.30; p=0.026) and diastolic 78.0±9.9 mmHg vs. 75.6±10.2 (t=1.80; p=0.05) blood pressure, and had a significant shift in their readiness to change in six of the seven health-related behaviors after only one semester.